

1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 263-6000  
Fax (916) 263-6042

**CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD**

12235 Beach Blvd., Suite 7  
Stanton, CA 90680  
(714) 890-7001  
Fax (714) 890-7006  
Contact:  
Mike Marten  
(714) 890-7004  
Pager: (714) 212-0325

CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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**BOARD REJECTS 2002 FAIRPLEX MOVE**

LOS ANGELES, CA – The California Horse Racing Board voted Wednesday against a change of venue for the Los Angeles County Fair Association's 2002 race meet at Fairplex Park in Pomona, rejecting the LACFA proposal to run its upcoming 17-day meet at Santa Anita Park in Arcadia.

However, some commissioners indicated they are willing to consider a change of venue for the Fairplex meet when the Board considers the 2003 racing calendar. The CHRB Racing Dates Committee will hold its first meeting on the 2003 racing calendar on July 26 at Del Mar.

Although the commissioners heard brief testimony Wednesday on some of the unresolved legal issues surrounding the proposed change of venue, Chairman Alan Landsburg indicated the purpose of the meeting was primarily to receive new information that was not presented at the June 6 Board meeting or communicated in the numerous letters, e-mail, and telephone calls that he and the other commissioners have received in recent weeks.

Most of the new testimony came from about 20 owners and trainers overwhelmingly opposed to the proposal. Trainers Mel and Warren Stute, brothers who have been racing horses at Fairplex since the 1940s, both spoke in support of the tradition of Fairplex racing and the benefits of exposing fairgoers to horse racing. Trainers Caesar Dominguez and Jack Van Berg both said Pomona is for the "little guys" who form the backbone of horse racing. Jockey agent Richard Silverstein said Pomona is a proving ground for many jockeys and trainers trying to break into the tough Southern California circuit.

Elio Amato, president of the Fairplex Owners and Trainers Association, said trainers often charge their clients considerably less for training horses in Pomona away from the larger venues, so "Fairplex racing is beneficial to small owners."

After listening to more than two hours of testimony, the commissioners expressed their own thoughts, one by one, beginning with Commissioner Marie Moretti, who said: "I agree with those who say racing needs to reinvent itself, and the LACFA is trying to reinvent itself with this proposal, but the move is opposed by the rest of the industry. I personally like the experience of going to the fair. Today I would vote to reject the move from Fairplex to Santa Anita, but I would reject it for this year only and without prejudice for future years."

Vice Chairman Roger Licht said, "I've heard more testimony about what is in the best interests of each racing entity than I have heard about what is best for racing as a whole. My position is that I am not for the move in 2002." Licht indicated a willingness to consider the issue again for the 2003 calendar if it can be shown to be in the best interests of racing.

Chairman Landsburg said racing faces many major issues, including the crisis in workers' compensation insurance and backstretch labor matters, "and the way we have always done it is not the way we should keep on doing it and survive. In my mind, (running the Fairplex meet at Santa Anita) will upgrade the quality of racing on a national level. My inclination is to approve the move for a one-year trial."

Commissioner Sheryl Granzella said she agreed with Landsburg: "Let's approve it on a one-year trial basis and give them a chance."

Commissioner John Harris said, "The way it is now (running the meet at Fairplex) better serves total racing. There is a vitality and variety of racing there. I don't think you are reinventing yourself by going to Santa Anita with a 17-consecutive-day meet. That isn't going to bring any vitality to racing. I am against this move as it is proposed. It has got to be looked at in the total context of all the racing dates."

Commissioner John Sperry said, "As the newest commissioner, I've been listening to the testimony trying to figure out where you are all coming from. I'm confused about how simply moving to a bigger racetrack is going to help. I think getting more people in the gate is the key to raising handle. I don't believe this proposal is in the best interests of racing. I think it would be best to keep racing in Pomona."

Commissioner Sperry then made a motion to keep the upcoming September 13-29 race meet at Fairplex. Commissioners Harris, Licht, and Moretti voted with him to approve the motion. Chairman Landsburg voted against. Commissioner Granzella abstained. Commissioner William Bianco was not present at the meeting.

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